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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS
TREASURY FOR ANNE ALIKONIS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECIN](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KE](#) [NEPAD](#)

SUBJECT: KENYA LAUNCHES SELF-ASSESSMENT ON GOVERNANCE
UNDER NEPAD

Sensitive-but-unclassified. Not for release outside USG channels.

1. (SBU) Summary: Kenya has launched a self-assessment of its governance practices and performance under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), itself an offspring of the New Economic Partnership for Africa (NEPAD), an Africa-wide organization with the ambitious goal of revitalizing the continent's politics and economy. Thus far in Kenya, the APRM exercise has produced only a slew of new acronyms and an elaborate bureaucratic structure to legitimize and support it. As such, it's possible it will prove to be no more than an elaborate form of window dressing to conceal the absence of substantive improvements in governance. On the other hand, the APRM's upcoming "internal audit" of governance in Kenya could prove to be a powerful tool for citizens to critique the country's performance in this area and thus point the way toward needed reforms. Despite insistence that the APRM be an African initiative paid for and fully "owned" by Africans, in Kenya at least it is being funded in part by foreign donors. End summary.

Background: NEPAD's Vision for Africa

12. (U) Amid much fanfare, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning and National Development, Kenya publicly launched on February 23 the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) country self-assessment. According to the organizers of the event, Kenya is one of the first four "front-runner" countries to subject itself to the APRM, along with Ghana, Rwanda, and Mauritius.

13. (U) The APRM springs from the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), itself an African Union initiative whose strategic framework was adopted by the Organization of African Unity in July 2001. According to a generic brochure picked up at the February 23 launching, NEPAD is nothing short of "a vision and strategic framework for Africa's renewal." At the February 23 APRM launch, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, a member of NEPAD's "APR Panel of Eminent Persons" spoke in passionate terms about NEPAD and the APRM as originating from the painful recognition by African leaders at the turn of the century that the continent had become economically marginalized due to poor leadership and governance by Africans themselves. NEPAD, in Kiplagat's words, is a chance for an "African rebirth."

Goals and Methodology of the APRM

14. (U) According to Kiplagat, the APRM is "an audit on how we are governing ourselves today." In Kenya, the process began in March 2003, when the country acceded to the APRM and formed a temporary task force to kick start the process. The government then held two "national stakeholders forums" in July, 2004, and with input from a NEPAD APRM Support Mission the following month, subsequently established a 33-member APRM Governing Council composed of representatives from the Government of Kenya, the private sector, academia, and civil society.

15. (U) Under the APRM structure established in Kenya, the Council and the NEPAD Kenya Secretariat (located in the Planning Ministry) are to provide overall direction and oversight to four specialized "lead technical agencies", all of whom are either fully- or quasi-independent local think-tanks or policy institutes. The four technical agencies are each responsible for carrying out the APRM in one of four "thematic groups:"

-- Democracy and Political Governance;
-- Socio-Economic Development;
-- Macro-economic Governance;
-- Corporate Governance.

16. (U) The APRM process appears divided and subdivided into a bewildering series of cycles, stages and phases. Currently, Kenya has just launched the first "stage" - an self-assessment, or "internal audit," of its governance trends and environment. Kenya intends to conduct this internal audit from the bottom up through a series of questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions directed at representative samples of all Kenyan households. The audit will also include input from an expert panel. The exercise is meant to gather information and public opinion on current trends and national performance in the four thematic groups outlined above.

17. (U) Kenya's Stage One self-assessment is due to be completed by May. Crucially, it includes a draft "Program of Action" for closing the gaps in governance revealed by the self-assessment. Thereafter, Stage Two will involve a "Country Review Visit," or external audit, by non-Kenyan NEPAD representatives from other African countries. Stage Three will involve preparation of an APR Team Report summarizing the findings of the two audits and analyzing their implications for Kenya's governance and economic development. In Stage Four, the APR Team Report goes to the "APR Forum" (about which we know little; we assume it is a non-Kenyan NEPAD entity) to be vetted and then returned to the Kenyan head of state. In Stage Five, the report will be made public in Kenya and to other NEPAD countries for further discussion and for the extraction of best practices and lessons learned.

Who's Paying for It?

18. (U) In his comments, APR Eminent Person Ambassador Kiplagat was passionate in insisting that Kenya participate in the APRM "for our own sake, and the sake of our wives and children." The process, he added, "Must be owned by us," and he reiterated language in NEPAD literature calling for African countries to ensure ownership of the process by funding APRM self-assessments themselves, and not relying on donor funding. It was thus one of the ironies of the February 23 event that it was delayed by an hour because of an earlier signing ceremony in which the UK and Sweden agreed to provide financial assistance to the self-assessment exercise. Further, Kenya had earlier received assistance from the EU to launch the APRM in 2004.

Comment: A Worthy Endeavor or a Waste of Time?

19. (SBU) Our understanding of the APRM remains rudimentary, but we are concerned by the number of new acronyms it is already generating, by the length of time it is taking to implement, and by the complexity of the bureaucratic structures and processes it has created in Kenya alone. In short, we fear this may turn out to be yet another paper exercise in which an unnecessarily convoluted process is used as window dressing to conceal the absence of tangible achievements in terms of governance reform.

110. (SBU) That said, Kenya and the other three "front-runners" should be given credit for undertaking the APRM exercise voluntarily, and Kenya deserves extra credit for the inclusiveness it has built into the process through the extensive participation of civil society, the private sector, and academia. Further, should the internal audit manage to remain independent of excessive government manipulation, it could prove to be a powerful, grass-roots tool for examining and critiquing governance at all levels of Kenyan society. In sum, time will tell whether the APRM is a waste of time and money -- or whether it is a worthy endeavor which contributes to a more honest, transparent, and democratic political culture in Kenya.